

# The Broken Rifle

Newsletter of War Resisters' International



Vengeance will be ours - message from Britain First, a right-wing militarist group in Britain

## Conscientious objection: today and tomorrow

In London on 22nd May, a soldier walking back to his barracks was killed by two people armed with knives. The soldier was a white member of the British army, the attackers black men of the Muslim faith.

The response, witnessed on social and mainstream media, as well as in streets, buses and pubs, has included a torrent of racist, Islamophobic and nationalistic abuse. I noticed with sadness that a friend of mine 'shared' a post on social media from a group called Britain First that read: 'THEY'VE KILLED ONE OF OUR BOYS IN WOOLWICH...KICK THE BASTARDS OUT NOW'.

The post was referring to all Muslims. And a follow up read: 'May God comfort his family and grant our young martyr eternal rest.' A subsequent post included a picture of woman who confronted the attackers described as a hero, and a comment in response said: 'My husband is ex-forces...and if he saw that happen in front of him he already said he would have gone in there no matter what, not stand by and let women go forward!'. The Stop the War Coalition, a UK anti-war organisation, have issued a public statement

condemning the killing, and the backlash to it.

Militarism works most effectively with the existence of a threat – a 'them' – used to justify its existence. In Britain today, Islam is one scapegoat that serves this purpose.

I share this brief story, partly as a telling illustration of the way militarism interacts and is reinforced by factors such as nationalism, racism, patriarchy and ideals of heroism, and partly, since The Broken Rifle remains a newsletter as well as a magazine, to give a glimpse into the social and political context of Britain today. Impacts of cuts to public services and the ongoing rhetoric of the war on terror expose fractures along class, ethnicity and religious lines. These lines are being exploited by right-wing and militarist groups.

### Militarism: presenting the alternative today

How can we demonstrate our refusal to adopt cornerstones of militarism such as uniformity, othering and brutality - forces that have been so apparent in Britain in the last days? Refusing to participate in one of the most

## Editorial

This issue of The Broken Rifle provides updates as to the situation for conscientious objectors in certain states, gives examples of useful instances to learn from in past campaigns, and supplies some suggestions in response to the question 'what next' for conscientious objection.

An introductory article teases out the topics that arise in this edition, then Laura Pollecutt's piece on the End Conscription Campaign reminds us of the role they had in the anti-apartheid movement, and warns that in South Africa there are often signals that conscription may return.

Carlos Barranco's article on *los insumisos*, along with Eva Aneiros' review of *Insumisión. Una forma de vida* ('Disobedience. A form of life') by Rosario Domínguez, explore experiences of the end of conscription in the state of Spain, proceeding Kaj Raninen, who looks towards the same process in Finland. George Karatzas then provides an update as to the situation for COs in Greece.

We include a review of CONscription - a film installation focused on Turkey showing in London this month - by Albert Beale, and are pleased to reprint a joint statement from Egyptian and Israeli CO movements.

Moving beyond a focus on conscription, Hans Lammerant outlines the development of militarism in many areas towards professional armies and 'remote control wars' in his article 'The end of conscription and the transformation of war'.

Bob Meola looks back at the decade since the invasion of Iraq, and particularly the experiences of COs who had voluntarily joined the armed forces.

Gayle Kinkad's work with the 'conscience' peace tax campaign in Britain highlights one of the many ways in which the concept of conscientious objection is taken beyond military service. You can learn about the work of WRI's Right to Refuse to Kill programme in short pieces on the soon-to-be-launched CO Guide, and on the Countering the Militarisation of Youth work, which next month sees the publication of 'Sowing Seeds: The Militarisation of Youth and How to Counter it'. We are glad to publish two truncated versions of work that will be published in this book from Sahar Vardi (looking at Israel) and Rafael Uzcátegui (in Venezuela).

Hannah Brock

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obvious manifestations of militarism was once, and in many places remains, conscientious objection to military service.

Conscription is alive and well. From Venezuela to Turkey, Russia to Greece, Eritrea to Armenia, the draft is how the military procures labour. Resistance continues through conscientious objection. An article giving updates from Greece in this edition records a regression in the treatment of COs there. A law proposal in Colombia is currently trying to close the gap between state policy and state provision: the Constitutional Court of Colombia ruled in 2009 that there is a right to conscientious objection under the constitution, but COs in practice are forcibly recruited, many in batidas – street raids. And Natan Blanc, a CO in Israel, is in prison for the tenth time – giving him the curious record of being the CO with the most re-imprisonments in Israel.

However, many countries in the past 20 years (primarily in Western Europe) have suspended conscription, and in others there are debates about its future. In January, the government of Austria held a referendum on conscription. The majority voted to maintain it. Analysis of this result suggested that many made this choice because they feared that organisations, including the Red Cross, which benefit from substitute service, would suffer if conscription were abolished. This raises the paradox that substitute 'civilian' service has served to maintain conscription to the military – one argument total objectors use against it.

Debates around substitute service are well-worn amongst antimilitarists. A recent article in *Azione Nonviolenta* reignited these debates, praising alternative service for imbuing Italian society with altruistic values. Meanwhile Carlos Pérez Barranco's article on the *insumisión* movement in Spain provides a powerful example of how rejecting alternative service can also undermine military service. These debates are still relevant, since many still are still faced with making the choice. Today in Finland, where the length of substitute service is punitive, total objector Jaakko Jekunen has been in prison since 4 December 2012, charged with a "civilian service crime" (*siviilipalvelusrikos*).

### Conscientious objection tomorrow

Hans Lammerman reminds us that the end of conscription does not necessarily constitute success for antimilitarist movements, it's just that conscripts are no longer deemed necessary to fulfil contemporary militarist needs. Our tax funds professional armies of volunteers who orchestrate 'remote control' wars in lands far from where they come from: they no longer need to conscript us, they conscript our money. Kaj Raninen writes that many people believe conscription in Finland will end soon, as the military establishment recognises conscription is 'no longer



required' in a post-Cold World War context and in light of developments in military technology. Militarist culture and discourse adapts, lending its power to recruit personnel and justify future 'remote' wars.

With the end of conscription, militarism – like a hydra, who with one head cut off grows two more – must develop. As must antimilitarists.

As a previous edition of *The Broken Rifle* explained, WRI's Right to Refuse to Kill programme is focusing on developing in one particular way: the Countering the Militarisation of Youth project looks at the ways in which young people – whether conscripted or not – are militarised. This militarisation takes different forms, but the type of impact is the same: young people (and since I was not long ago a 'young person' myself, I speak also from my own experience) are persuaded to support military values and respect military actions. Our recent fundraising appeal focused on this issue.

### International Day of Action

Young people refusing to cooperate in systems that infiltrate their lives with military values is one direction that conscientious objection might turn. This might be in education, where the military and arms companies fund and influence; it might be in entertainments (from video games, to films, to leisure activities), or it might be in the streets, disrupting militarist events and installations. The International Day of Action on 14th June focuses on military-free education and research, and simultaneously everyone can get involved in an online conversation we are co-hosting on this and related topic.

In this edition of *The Broken Rifle* we also feature content from 'Sowing Seeds: The Militarisation of Youth and How to Counter It', which we are publishing in June. The book looks at example of militarisation of youth, and resistance to it, in different parts of the world – the sections on Israel and Venezuela are available here. We hope it will inspire future cooperation between those doing this work.

### 'Lines in the sand' tomorrow

For international conscientious objectors day, in London, I was part of a discussion group on 'conscientious objection in

everyday life'. In this group we talked about the ways in which pacifism and conscientious objection crossover, and how they are distinct. Both, in a sense, can go beyond each other: pacifism compels us to do more than refusing to join the armed forces, and conscientious objection is a useful concept beyond pacifism, referring generally to those things that we are compelled to oppose.

In our discussion group, we envisaged conscientious objection as a line in the sand, drawn at the point at which an individual or group refuses to go beyond. As I've mentioned, we are exploring one of these lines in the sand through the countering the militarisation of youth work. There is an article in this edition about conscientious objection to tax for military purposes, another 'line in the sand' for many people.

There are countless faces of militarism that warrant our non-cooperation, but, as the discussion group that night concluded, if these are not part of a wider, orchestrated campaign that attempts to disrupt some aspect of militarisation, then our non-cooperation risks being irrelevant: appeasing our conscience without contributing to social change beyond the ripples that may or may not spread from an individual's single or repeated behaviour. That said, individual acts of opposition add to the dynamism of resistance, and might be forerunners of more organised and concerted activities later. Moreover, as many conscientious objectors have started out as COs and gone on to participate an array of nonviolent activism, such small acts of resistance can encourage a deeper understanding of the complexities of militarism, and a desire to do something about it. Since joining WRI in September, I've been hugely excited by the prospect of working with antimilitarists in WRI across the world to coordinate some healthy non-cooperation.

Hannah Brock



# South Africa: Conscription can lurk in the wings

The apartheid government used conscription of white males to grow its military might and keep the majority of South Africans oppressed. Introduced in 1967 for white males, the initial nine months was increased to one year in 1972. From the very beginning there were objections, and in 1974 the South African Council of Churches passed a resolution challenging its members to consider becoming conscientious objectors. In the same year the National Union of South African Students came out in support of the churches and the government made it an offence to encourage conscientious objection. This did not deter the churches from encouraging conscientious objection and to reject government's attempts to make it illegal to encourage such action.

In 1977 national service was increased to two years. The call for a non-military national service became louder after this - as did the call for political asylum for war resisters and deserters from apartheid's armed forces. Notwithstanding Michael Bevan's suicide hours before he was to report for national service, penalties for those convicted for failing to perform military service were increased.

In 1978 the Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR) was formed in Britain and in South Africa itself, the Conscientious Objector Support Group (COSG) was beginning to come together. This group was formalised at a conference in July 1980. Help was offered on a number of levels including support, advice and assistance to COs and their families. Some members of the anti-apartheid women's organization, the Black Sash, who also worked in COSG, initiated a resolution - which was passed - calling for the end of conscription. Although it was illegal to convince conscripts not to go to the army, it was not illegal to call for the end of conscription. The End Conscription Campaign was therefore formed at the COSG conference in 1983, and publicly launched in October 1984. COSG then became an affiliate of the campaign.

## Thorn in apartheid's side

The ECC was to become a real thorn in the side of the apartheid government that accused it of subjecting young South Africans to ECC's "propaganda, suspicion sowing and misinformation". ECC members were harassed, detained, tear-gassed and firebombed. But instead of fostering hatred and condemnation of the ECC, the government's actions spurred more conscripts to become involved and sign the register of objectors. Although forced to give up its campaign when it was banned in 1988 along with other internal anti-apartheid organizations (as opposed to those organizations operating outside of the country), the ECC unbanned itself in 1989 by ignoring the banning order and continuing its campaign against conscription. In February 1990, the President, FW de Klerk, announced

the release of Nelson Mandela and unbanning of political parties. This led to the return of those who had gone into exile, peace talks and the first free elections in 1994. Conscription as well as the ECC ended officially in 1993. COSG faded away, but not before the group made strong arguments for South Africa to articulate its position regarding the right not to bear arms. With the disbandment of the ECC, the Ceasefire Campaign came into being to continue to promote demilitarization, disarmament and peace in a new South Africa.

Although the new dispensation made a commitment to a professional voluntary army, different defence ministers have suggested that there should be military service, especially Lindiwe Sisulu who held the position from 2009 to 2012. In May 2010 she announced her intention of enlisting unemployed youths in a 'national service programme'. She said this would not mean the reintroduction of military conscription. However, although it would not be compulsory, it would be unavoidable!

Minister Sisulu pandered to that section of the population who believe that crime and service delivery protests have their origins in the 'ill-discipline' of the youth: "We would like to have a period in which we take your children and give them a bit of discipline," she said.

Even though there is no legislation on the statute book at this point, the army is taking advantage of the fact that millions of schools leavers do not have jobs and lack opportunities to continue their studies. The Military Skills Development System (MSDS) is a two-year voluntary service system with the long-term goal of "enhancing the South African National Defence Force's deployment capability. Recruits are required to sign up for a period of two years".

Defence review encourages 'militarisation of South Africa's democracy' During the period 1996-1998, the new government embarked upon a defence review. More recently it saw fit to once again do such a review. The Committee was appointed by Minister Sisulu. Although she was relieved of her position as Minister of Defence in 2012, Sisulu's influence surfaces in sections that recommend national service. Apart from the many items Ceasefire took issue with in the report - believing that its contents could be a recipe for the militarization of South Africa's democracy - we were particularly concerned with these proposals for national service.

We concluded that the Committee evidently viewed the inculcation of a military world-view in the minds and attitudes of young people as an unqualified good.

In Chapter 2, section 57 of the first draft it is stated: "Military service, even quite brief periods, can

play an important and valuable role in:

- a. Maturing and socializing young adults;
- b. Providing a stable environment in which to enhance the education of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- c. Developing in young people from different communities and social sectors a national consciousness and cohesion..."

In order to achieve this, the draft report proposes:

- the establishment of a National Youth Service (NYS) as an auxiliary service of the Department of Defence
- the introduction of cadet systems
- the use of research and development funding to attract young people to engineering and science (Chapter 2, section 63(b));
- service-specific "Youth Development Programmes"
- the use of these programmes to recruit for the SANDF

Ceasefire argued that these proposals were particularly problematic and reminiscent of the apartheid regime's military response to the "total onslaught". Young people should not be taught the ways of violence or to glorify war. Our submission argued: "The introduction of war games in schools through a cadet system will inevitably result in or necessitate compulsion, thus condoning conscription at ages at which children are not mature enough to challenge militarist thinking and make ethical choices between conscription and conscientious objection. In fact nowhere in the draft report is there a rejection of conscription per se. The only reference to conscription is a comment in Chapter 4, section 57 blaming the decline in the reserve component on the abolition of conscription. The Committee needs not only to reconsider the above-mentioned proposals but also to make it clear that there should be no compulsory military service or conscription of any form whatsoever."

## Peace corps alternative

The Ceasefire Campaign recommended that instead of military service, the government should establish a peace corps outside of the Department of Defence. This would enable young people to contribute to peace and development both in South Africa and amongst our neighbouring states. That would be a far better way of inculcating constructive values amongst young people. As it is, the proposal smacks of empire-building.

Although the Committee accepted our submission, it was not taken seriously. Some window-dressing consultation did take place but we were not given time to do a presentation. The third, and we presume final draft, has not changed this position in any significantly positive way.

Laura Pollecutt



# The Insumisión movement against military service in Spain: legitimate disobedience

In December 2001, the last recruits abandoned military barracks across Spain after having completed the final nine months of obligatory military service. In many European states, the end of forced recruitment had been motivated almost exclusively by the military forces' evolution towards global intervention operations, whilst in Spain the system of forced recruitment had collapsed despite years of government efforts.

The end of military service was a social victory in Spain. Even though the political elites and military tried to wrap the end of conscription in a discourse about the 'modernisation' of the army, the facts show that the key factor that really provoked the end of compulsory military service was three decades of continuous action by a broad social movement, which used civil disobedience against conscription as one of its fundamental signs of identity. In the decade running up to the change in 2001, obligatory military service became completely socially discredited, and the majority of Spanish society saw it as a useless and harmful institution. This was impossible to imagine in the 1970s, when the movement had just begun to organise itself, and there was an increase in the number of cases of public disobedience to recruitment for pacifist and anti-militarist reasons. At that time it was also hard to imagine that by the second half of the 1990s the number of applications for substitute service would greatly exceed the number of recruits, reaching a backlog of up to a million applications that were impossible to absorb into the alternative service system. Those who resisted military service as well as alternative service, the *insumisos*,

could be counted by the thousands.

## First steps: From the Jehovah's Witnesses to anti-militarist objectors

During Franco's military dictatorship, many Jehovah's Witnesses refused to perform military service because of their religious beliefs, and suffered long prison sentences without regarding their refusal as a tool for social change. This sort of limited 'conscientious objection', which did not question or threaten military structures (which at that time were also the structures of the state itself), was later used as the model for legislation that would provide for conscientious objection, despite the fact that at the beginning of the 1970s already had a clear public, anti-militarist, conscientious and self-organised form.

In the last years in the life of the dictator and the regime, the first civil objectors to military service organised support campaigns, publicly refuse recruitment, harnessed the media, always appealing to the public with pacifist and anti-militarist arguments justifying their disobedience. The first groups of conscientious objectors formed and worked in particularly impoverished neighbourhoods instead of doing military service, in order to make their social alternative easily understandable. They demanded and created a sort of alternative, self-organised civilian service outside of the state conscription mechanisms. With the refusal of these objectors to accept the first legislation regarding conscientious objection for religious reasons, the Conscientious Objectors Movement (MOC) was founded, giving a name to an

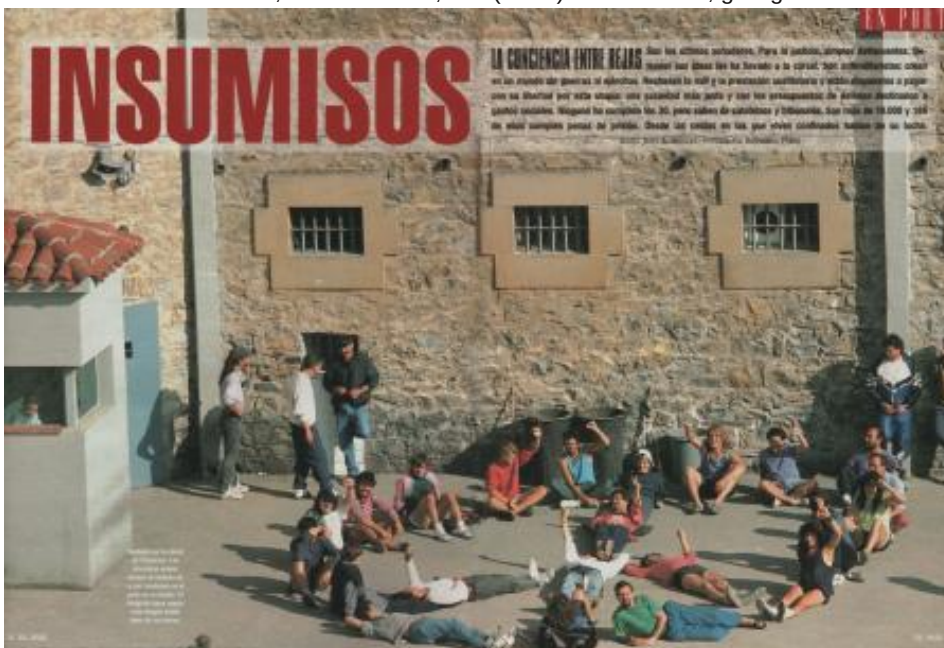
existing network of groups that had been the main driver of disobedience over the last 30 years. During the 1970s more objectors were sent to military prison, but, as would be confirmed in later years, this repression would not break up the movement. On the contrary, it would make it grow and increase its public influence.

## From objectors to insubordinates: *los insumisos*

In 1980 the Minister of Defence issued an internal order that momentarily halted the imprisonment of objectors. Whilst waiting for a new law to be written and enforced that would regulate conscientious objection, and institutionalise an alternative service, conscientious objectors were being sent directly to the 'reserves'. In practice this meant that there was a secret amnesty - a treaty that the movement used to strengthen itself and prepare new strategies for disobeying this new law. The new conscientious objection law, designed to tame the objection to conscription movement, confine it to small numbers of people, and thus save military recruitment, finally arrived in 1986 after a long, problematic legislative process (including a claim of unconstitutionality brought to the Constitutional Court). The alternative service system was not set up until 1989. At that time, the civil disobedience movement was less of an 'objectors' group' than it had been in the 1970s, as it had regenerated and evolved, and its anti-militarist discourse had become deeper and more radical. Civil disobedience and nonviolence were now tools for not only ending military service, but also for dismantling the army and military system, and radically transforming society to confront militarism in its different social manifestations. First MOC, and then other networks like the Coordinadora Mili-KK, announced that they would refuse the alternative service that was established by the Law on Conscientious Objection. On 20 February 1989 the first fifty *insumisos* publicly appeared at the entrances of the various Military Governments in different Spanish cities, giving rise to a new phase of civil disobedience known as *insumisión*.

## Repression's 'Boomerang Effect'

*Insumisión* began as a campaign developed by these networks and followed by hundreds of objectors, but with the passing of time, the intense debate that it caused, the support of ever wider and varied social groups and the 'boomerang effect' from the repressive imprisonment of the *insumisos* (the sentences were for 2 years, 4 months and a day in prison) caused the figures to continue to rise during the early 1990s.



Rebellious *insumisos* in Pamplona prison yard, as reported in El País, 1993





The movement was able to resist imprisonment thanks to the generation of a broad network of groups supporting the *insumisos*, and through 'training' objectors before prison. 'Self-incriminations' also played a very important role in cushioning the repression against *insumisos*, and in creating support networks and solidarity. For every *insumiso* tried, four people signed and presented declarations to the same court charging themselves for having led and aided the *insumiso* in their disobedience. According to Spanish law this crime should also be prosecuted and receive a sentence equivalent to that given to the *insumiso*. Despite this, no self-incriminated person was ever prosecuted.

Given the evidence that prison was increasing the breadth and impact of solidarity with the imprisoned objectors, the socialist party government of the time decided to first assign all imprisoned *insumisos* to open prisons (something that a very disobedient part of the moment fought, refusing to return to prison and obliging the prison authorities to send them back to closed, standard regimen prisons). Later, in 1995, the government replaced prison sentences with 'disqualification' or 'civil death'. From this point on, *insumisión* was so widespread that it became 'normal', and the majority of the thousands of young people who refused to be recruited did so by themselves, without any coordination with the movement.

### The system collapses

At the same time, alternative service was seen by more and more young people as something 'easy' and not particularly

'radical' compared to *insumisión*. Hundreds of thousands of people requested alternative service in place of military service and this collapsed the system. Having been conceived as a minority option, it could not cope with the large number of participants. In addition, the movement was able to get many NGOs and associations to refuse to offer alternative service posts, which was in practice a boycott of the alternative service programme. This finally strangled it. The majority of young people opted for alternative service but never carried it out because of lack of posts. This caused the complete collapse of the whole military and civilian recruitment system. Thus, in 1996, the government announced that military service would come to an end in 2003 (this changed to 2001), and instead they would form an army of professional soldiers. This announcement accelerated the collapse still further, and also caused the disbandment of a large part of the disobedience movement against obligatory military service, since they felt that the principle objective had been achieved.

### 'Insumisión in the barracks' and the end of military service

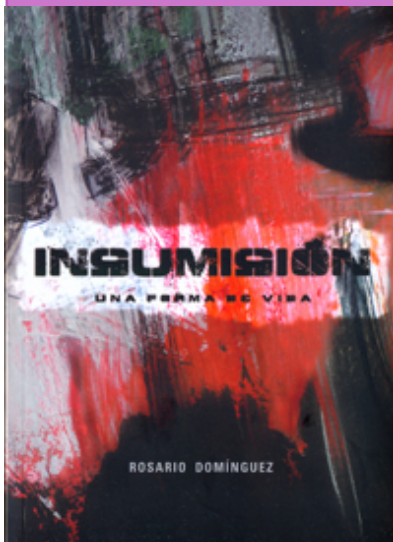
Despite this, the movement organised and carried out new forms of disobedience to recruitment, such as the so-called 'insumisión in the barracks', in which this author participated in from 1997. Dozens of MOC antimilitarists continue this work, declaring ourselves to be objectors after being incorporated into military ranks. In this way the movement seeks to deepen the recruitment crisis and return the debate to within the ranks of the military, which recently has transformed itself into a force for global

intervention.

Simultaneously, we interfere in the military's public professional recruitment campaigns. The '*insumisión* in the barracks' was a transition campaign towards this new landscape, in which the antimilitarist movement no longer had military service or conscientious objection. This campaign developed while the MOC sank into debates, without having defined the lines of action that it would pursue a few years later, focusing on criticism of the military industry and expenditure, counter-recruitment and campaigns for the closure of military bases, amongst other themes.

In any case, first the conscientious objection moment and then the wider and more varied *insumisión* movement are prime examples of civil disobedience movements, because of their widespread social impact and goals. Though you have to recognise that the military institutions had a very bad social reputation for having supported Franco's dictatorship, and that a certain anti-repressive culture was widespread in Spanish society anyway, *insumisión* demonstrated that civil disobedience has immense power for social transformation. We have attempted to record this story in a book edited in 2001, "*En legítima desobediencia*" (In Legitimate Disobedience), produced by the MOC, with texts contributed by people and groups who participated in the conscientious objectors' movement in its different phases. This had a clear purpose: to provide inspiration and experience to the disobedience campaigns of years to come, struggles which are already with us in new and surprising ways.

## Review: *Insumisión. Una forma de vida* ('Disobedience. A form of life')



In 1989 Charo's son Enrique tells her that he is not going to report for duty when they call him up. He explains that "he's against war and all the structures that make it possible and so he was refusing to learn to operate weapons or serve the army in any way". The *Insumisión* campaign had just begun and Enrique had decided to be a part of what would grow to be a historic mobilisation, even though nobody could have imagined it at the time. This stance appears quite reasonable to Charo, but she finds it hard to believe that it could cost her son more than two years in prison, until one day the Military Police arrive at her home and take her son away to the Alcalá de Henares military prison. Charo's story of disobedience begins from there.

In *Insumisión. Una forma de vida* (Disobedience. A form of life. Madrid: Asamblea Antimilitarista de Madrid, 2012), Charo (Rosario Domínguez) tells her story as a mother who decided that if the military took her son, then they would find out what she was made of. She recounts how a group of parents, but particularly mothers, came together to support each other, in order to support their sons and try to understand them. Dozens of mothers of *insumisos* passed through the group, some only present during their sons' judicial proceedings. Others were around for the entire *Insumisión* campaign and acted as mothers for all the objectors, visiting those in jail those who were from other cities and didn't have nearby family, taking into their homes the young people who attended the state assemblies of the Objectors of Conscience Movement (*Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia* – MOC), protesting with them, going to trials, etc.

The book reveals how the author was transformed from being a "submissive and good girl" to being "insubordinate and disobedient". How one learns to disobey and question. But this book also takes a journey through the entire *Insumisión* campaign with press clippings, historical facts, and above all many personal anecdotes of her experiences with her son and with all the pacifist young people who walked the Spanish State with peaceful steps during those days.



# Conscription: coming slowly to an end in Finland?

Conscription have had a very special role in Finnish society. For decades, conscription for males was seen as an integral part of Finnish society, and for the vast majority of young Finnish men it was self evident that they would do military service. In fact, until the early 1990's, almost 90% of them did it. If someone dared to question conscription system, they were usually ridiculed.

Conscientious objectors were quite a small minority (2-3% of all conscripts), in whom the state was never really interested. In this situation the strategy of Finnish CO-movement was - quite naturally - to struggle for improvements to legislation which governed the substitute service and later also to support total objectors. Of course we wanted also to abolish conscription, but it was not a realistic aim.

However, during the last 20 years, the situation has been slowly changing. During the first half of 1990's the number of substitute servers rose from 2-3% of all conscripts to 7-8% (it's still about the same now). It was also noticed in Finland that during the 90's many Western European countries abolished conscription or reformed it radically, which created for the first time some serious discussion about its future in Finland.

The slow decline of conscription has continued also in this millennium. 25 years ago, almost 90% of Finnish men did military service. Around 2000, the percentage was still over 80 - nowadays it's around 65. So, there is a slow transition to "selective conscription" going on also in Finland. However, this transition has been also "silent". No major changes had been made to conscription laws and even now there hasn't been any widespread discussion about the future of the system. So the transition has been made by practical means: military and substitute service authorities are giving exemptions to conscripts much more easily than they did in the past, although the regulations about it are officially still the same. At the same time a change is also going on people's minds: the social norm that every young male must go to army is much weaker than it was, and the social pressure from peers and elders for those who don't go to the military is much

lighter nowadays.

Conscription is still deeply rooted in Finnish society and some political forces, especially those from the older generation, who still want to close their eyes from the change which is going on. Because of that, there is no widespread political discussion about the topic, and in government papers on defence policy and military doctrine, conscription is still taken for granted. In fact, the governmental institution most eager to start the discussion has been army itself. They cannot, however, openly lobby for the abolition of conscription because it was created for army's needs. It is still seen as a cornerstone of the Finnish military system by many, and until recently they themselves were proudly proclaiming it as a necessity. In the end, they do not necessarily want to abolish it because it does still have some positive value for them. However, they do want to ensure that training conscripts does not disturb their more important tasks (i.e. preparing for modern warfare and taking part in NATO's wars). Such a disturbance cannot be avoided if they have to train as many conscripts as they are at the moment - let alone as many as they were a few years ago.

In the end, conscription will be abolished in Finland and basically for the same reasons as it has been in other countries: in the post cold war world, and with the current military technology, it is simply no longer needed, and finally the state and politicians will have to accept that. It's impossible to say how long it will take, surely at least five years from now, maybe even ten or more - but the final outcome is clear.

Antimilitaristic movements must of course be aware of what is happening and react accordingly. At the moment 'traditional CO work' constitutes to be a big part of our work - although not as big as in days gone by. We are still working for better CO-laws and practices, against the unofficial discrimination against COs in working life and elsewhere in society (which is still a problem in Finland, although not as big as it once was) and supporting total objectors (most of whom are now sentenced to home detention instead of prison).

As I mentioned, the Finnish government has traditionally seen substitute service as a 'necessary evil' and hasn't been very interested in it. However, a few years ago the Ministry of Employment (who governs the substitute service) published a document called 'Civilian Service in 2020', in which they expressed an aspiration to make substitute service much bigger, 'more acceptable' and 'more useful to the society' - similarly to how it was in Germany, and is still in Austria. To say the least, the report was not greeted with great enthusiasm by political parties or the general public, and it seems that government's and military's decades-long efforts to marginalise and neglect conscientious objection are now working against their new aim to save the conscription through substitute service. Personally, I think that in the Finnish context this effort is flogging a dead horse, but we must still be ready to have the discussion.

Questions like CO as a right for professional or voluntary soldiers, the militarisation of youth and militarisation of women, are growing increasingly important from the Finnish antimilitaristic perspective, when the military is preparing for 'post-conscription' situation and seeking new ways to be present in society and uphold militarism inside it. Voluntary conscription for women has been possible in Finland for almost two decades, but it hasn't been very popular: only 1-2% of young women apply for it. After the cold war, Finnish foreign policy and the military has been slowly integrated into NATO, and because of that we see cooperation and taking part in common campaigns with other European groups as very important.

Probably the transition away from conscription will be quite similar in Finland as to other countries. In Finland, it will just happen much later and take much longer than elsewhere. During this process we have also a chance to learn from the experiences of other antimilitarists, who have seen this process happening in their countries recently.

Kaj Raninen

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For the antimilitarist movement conscription was a logical target through which it could annoy war politics. Its disappearance does not mean that the antimilitarist movement is out of business as well.

Military interventions still start from

European bases. The technological turn gave the defense industry a boost and this defense industry is a major beneficiary of EU industrial policy. Also, the European arms trade is flourishing as never before. Conscription may disappear from Europe, but militarism is far from gone. The transformation of military strategies means that the antimilitarist movement also has to adapt its mode of

action.

Hans Lammerant



# Crackdown on Greek COs was expected and may intensify

Since the beginning of the year, a crackdown on conscientious objectors (and maybe draft evaders in general) has taken place in Greece. The arrest of 44 year old Nikolaos Karanikas in February, followed by that of 37 year old Haralampos Akrivopoulos in March, and of 30 year old Menelaos Exioglou in April, were the first after many years of relative calm. In this period, COs who were total objectors or refused to accept a punitive alternative service were still prosecuted and sentenced (some times in absentia) - to suspended prison sentences, in military courts - but without arrests.

All three of the recently arrested (and later released) COs, had already been sentenced in the past (Karanikas was also jailed back in 1995, before the right to conscientious objection was even partially recognized). Their arrests were made by police, under the procedures for "a recent crime", (a procedure that had not been used against COs for years), as the Greek State are interpreting draft evasion and desertion as continuous crimes. That means that in theory, a Greek conscientious objector (and a draft evader in general) may live most of his life, from the age of 18 to the age of 45, in fear of arrest at any time. On the other hand, the fact that Karanikas was acquitted, and the trials of Akrivopoulos and Exioglou postponed (although they continue to receive orders to draft), indicates that both internal and international solidarity - especially from Amnesty International, WRI and the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection - can still play a role in preventing worst situations.

## More trials to come

Apart from the arrests that can occur at any time, there are at least 2 scheduled trials of objectors in May - including that of 47 year old conscientious objector Dimitris Sotiropoulos, charged with "insubordination" (draft evasion) in a period of general military mobilization, for which he was prosecuted in 1994! Sotiropoulos is not at risk of arrest as he is no longer liable for conscription, since 2008 when his third child was born (Greek law exempts persons with three children from military service) but the criminal case against him is pending, and he might receive a suspended sentence.

Considering the number of total objectors in recent years, especially anarchists, we should expect many more trials (or even arrests) in the next months.

## A general regression

Furthermore, the overall situation for Greek COs has worsened in recent times. In 2012 there was an increase of rejections of applications for CO status, by the Ministry of Defence.

Even COs serving the 15 month-long alternative service are facing more problems than before, complaining of a delay of months, and complicated procedures, in order to obtain the monthly compensation of 223 euros - something vital for them considering that they also have to pay rent, as they are sent away from home. Meanwhile, the Neonazis in parliament, and several blogs, have spread lies about "COs who receive more money than the soldiers".

## An expected crackdown

The crackdown on Greek COs was to be expected considering the general political and social situation in the country. Acute financial crisis and harsh austerity measures have led to a fierce attack against the whole spectrum of human rights, civil and political, as well as social and economic. Increased and massive repression (including repression of almost every demonstration, torture of detainees, massive arrests of immigrants, even imprisonment of prostitutes for being HIV positive); a polarization of the political situation (with both "radical" left and the neo-Nazi party multiplying their force), and a general rise of nationalism both in government speeches and in many of those who oppose the government and the austerity measures, are some of the aspects of an "explosive" social situation. The incredible rise of Nazism, (7% in last years' election, more than 10%, and are the third party in the polls nowadays) combined with almost daily attacks against immigrants and refugees, leftists, anarchists, LGBT people etc. is the most dangerous phenomenon. The current government (a coalition of the rightwing party, the "socialists" and the "democratic left"), under pressure from the Nazis, has showed zero tolerance against all social movements, particularly against anarchists.

It would be naïve to expect that in the middle of this "Armageddon", conscientious objectors would remain untouched. Furthermore, the dramatic financial situation renders the fine of 6.000 Euros against draft evaders, a useful source of money for the government, if we remember that there are dozens of thousands of them.



Solidarity with Menelaos

## An urgent international campaign needed

For years, Greek COs have failed to build a mass movement. The left has supported only the issue of their rights, while failing to adopt conscientious objection as a political stance or to demand the abolition of military service. Many young men preferred to avoid the military service through medical exemption, and the anarchists only in the last years have returned to work seriously in this field again, opting for total objection, but despising those who opt for alternative service.

It is true that conscientious objection was perhaps the only social field where some victories and some slow progress were achieved, but that was partially an achievement of international solidarity. Nowadays, with the Greek social movements suffering attacks in all fronts, it is doubtful whether Greek COs alone can face this crackdown. Of course what will happen to them depends largely on what will happen to this country in general, but in any case an urgent and serious international solidarity campaign is needed more than anytime before, if we don't want to witness far worse situations.

George Karatzas

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and raised peace flags on city flag poles.

By resolution, Berkeley is also a sanctuary city, and also in 2007, the city council passed a resolution extending its sanctuary status for COs to draft registration resisters, draft resisters, if a military draft should be reinstituted, and to

military resisters who might be classified as AWOL or as deserters, even if they are not traditional COs, but are only opposed to the illegal and immoral Bush/Cheney/Obama wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. Finally, in 2010, the city council passed a resolution entitled, "Universal and Unconditional Amnesty for Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan War Military Resisters and

Veterans Who Acted in Opposition to the War for Matters of Conscience." These are the possibilities for more of tomorrow's conscientious objectors and war resisters.

Bob Meola



# Joint Statement: Freedom to Conscientious Objectors in the Middle East

Together, we in No to Compulsory Military Service (Egypt) and New Profile (Israel) confirm our support of peace and of conscientious objectors in both countries, re-affirming the human right to freedom of conscience, faith and self-determination. We condemn the way both our governments treat conscientious objectors: Natan Blanc, Emad El Dafrawi and Mohammed Fathy.

Natan Blanc, 19-year old Israeli conscript who first refused to serve in the Israeli army on November 19, 2012 and since has been in and out of military prison for the last 5 months, and still counting, declared at an alternative beacon lighting ceremony on April 14th 2013: "I refuse because I will not serve in an army that violates human rights regularly. I refuse because I will not serve as a tool to preserve the occupation... I refuse because it is the moral thing to do. I would like to dedicate this beacon to all the Palestinian detainees that are currently held in Administrative Detention... I remember always that while I am here in the spotlight, they are languishing in jail without being convicted of any offence".

In Egypt: Emad El Dafrawi, declared his conscientious objection to military service on April 12, 2012, and Mohammed Fathy Abdo Soliman, 23-years old, declared his conscientious objection to military service on July 20, 2012. Both declared that military service contradicts their belief in peace, and refuse all forms of violence and bearing arms. Both sent letters to the Minister of Defense and other Egyptian officials, asking for exemption from military service and serving a civilian service instead. For nearly a year now they have been living without most of their civil rights. They are not allowed to work, study or

travel. They are not even allowed to hold a travel document. The Egyptian state still ignores their suffering.

Since the right to conscientious objection is one of the basic human rights, as the right to freedom of expression and life, and is recognized in international charters on human rights such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (both signed and ratified by both



Natan Blanc holding pictures of Emad and Mohammed (with thanks for the photo to Yesh Gvul)

Egypt and Israel). Therefore, the movements No to Compulsory Military Service and New Profile call on both governments to respect international laws and meet their obligations to which they committed themselves in view of the international community, and to recognize the right of Natan Blanc, Emad El Dafrawi and Mohammed Fathy to conscientious objection to military service.

Cairo – Jerusalem  
April 28, 2013

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the superiority of male-identified values. ... It might be said that a mood of sexual harassment is endemic to the army. And so the demand that a woman enlist is tantamount to demanding that she cope with sexual harassment. I as a feminist, feel I must avoid military service and act to limit and reduce the influence of the army on civic society."

Today, we as members of Israeli feminist movements working towards the

demilitarization of Israeli society, must constantly provide a feminist alternative voice, both underlining the inherent patriarchy in the military and its effect on women, as well as presenting our alternative – a feminist voice for peace.

By Sahar Vardi, based on her article in the upcoming WRI book 'Sowing Seeds: The Militarisation of Youth and How to Counter It'

## Review: CONscription the exhibition

Conscientious objection is little enough dealt with in mainstream political discourse, let alone as the subject for a gallery installation.

So it was encouraging, and probably groundbreaking in a London context, that Filmpro - a "disabled-led digital art agency" - made conscientious objection (and, in particular, conscientious objection in Turkey) the subject of a two-week installation at an east London gallery during May, called CONscription.

The main installation was a multi-channel, immersive, video presentation, telling of individuals who meet at a military hospital: three subjects under assessment, and their doctor. The dialogue is based on the experiences of COs in Turkey, but presents the universal issues involved.

The displays also looked at the notorious Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, dating from 1939, a version of which is reportedly used for assessing the personality and psychopathology of Turkish conscripts who try to resist their enforced induction into the military.

The gallery also contained hanging banners telling the stories of individual Turkish COs, as well as explaining legal and statistical information about conscientious objection in Turkey and elsewhere.

The artist behind the project was Turkish film-maker Çağlar Kimyoncu.

Since the event coincided with this year's International Conscientious Objectors' Day, that evening the gallery hosted a discussion panel on the topic "Conscientious Objection: from personal right to universal responsibility". A well-attended meeting heard from activists and specialists in conscientious objection, who dealt with the situation in Turkey, in Britain, and more widely, as well as putting the issue in a broader political context.

It's hard to imagine the impact the installation would have had on a visitor to the gallery with no previous awareness of the issues raised. But certainly many who attended the discussion evening pronounced themselves interested in a topic they hadn't confronted before, and some of them networked with the speakers with the intention of following through by linking with related campaigns.

Albert Beale



# The end of conscription and the transformation of war

In Europe, conscription has mostly disappeared and made place for professional armies with high-tech weaponry. This was caused by a transformation of military strategies and a change in the political objectives of defense policy after the end of the Cold War.

Conscription fitted in Cold War military strategies. Mass armies (made up mostly of conscripts) were meant to defend a state's territory. Although the arms race between the two blocks also involved high-tech weaponry, the mass strategy included a wide range of military tasks that didn't require a lot of technical knowledge. Soldiers did not need long training before being ready to deploy. Their role was potential cannon fodder in wars of attrition comparable to the world wars.

Such strategies only work in wars where the political aim is seen as sufficiently important to enable activities that result in many casualties to be presented as in interests of the general population.

Conscription has its origins in the marriage between nationalism and the state. The French revolution transformed the state into the carrier - at least in ideological terms - of political ideals and national identities. Ordinary people became citizens, and citizens could be asked to die for their country. Napoleon raised large conscript armies and transformed war into a battle between nations instead of kings. This transformation culminated in the horror of the 2 world wars. It was continued through the Cold War strategy in Europe, with large conscript armies pitched against each other and augmented by the nuclear blackmail of mutual destruction.

Alongside of this battle between nations, several European states had another military business as well: colonialism. In general, colonial warfare was not done with conscripts but with professional soldiers. States could convince their own population to fight as conscripts for the defense of their own nation, but convincing people to die at the other side of the world for some business interest is less easy. Contemporary military interventions are generally implemented by professionals or volunteers even if the army is a conscript one.

The decolonisation after the second world war taught the colonial powers another lesson. When people develop a common idea to get rid of the foreign occupier, and are willing to die for it in violent or nonviolent resistance, it is difficult to sustain the occupation. The occupier just has too few boots on the ground to keep suppressing the population. Most colonial

regimes counted on colonial armies drawn from the local population, alongside a foreign officer corps. The development of national identities that could overcome local divisions, and anti-colonial sentiments made this method of control unsustainable. A lesson the West has now been learning again in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## New military missions requiring new types of army

The end of the Cold War also meant that mass conscription armies lost the enemy for which they were designed for. The military bureaucracy looked for new reasons for its existence: in other words, new enemies. The Iraq war of 1991 provided a prototype for new military missions: peace enforcement and humanitarian interventions.

These missions were of a different character, and the existing conscription armies were less suited to them. The larger distance between the country of origin and the theatre of operation necessitates a greater use of technology with fewer people, as a mass conscription army is not very mobile. The swift victory in the 1991 Iraq war fueled the hubris that the technological turn in warfare made victory possible without politically costly body bags. The Kosovo war in 1999 strengthened this idea.

Lean and mobile armies with well-trained soldiers were needed for this new military task. The large conscription armies became a relic of the past. Professional armies were better suited for this job. In the new political situation after the Cold War, conscription was slowly abolished in Europe. When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, conscription was still the rule in Europe, with some exceptions including the UK. Some countries abolished conscription quite early, like Belgium in 1994, while the majority followed after 2000. Now only some countries continue with conscription, like Finland and Greece. Specific circumstances explain the continuation of old defence postures in

these nations: primarily large neighbours that are considered military threats (Russia and Turkey respectively).

The human rights and responsibility to protect rhetoric pretends to be new, but the military strategy behind peace keeping occupations in fact recycles colonial warfare practices. Occupations need boots on the ground and this is a costly affair, while it remains difficult to convince the homefront of the need for such effort. Military superiority through advanced technologies proved enough to beat the outdated armies of smaller countries. But the power to destroy does not provide the power to govern, as became clear in the Iraq and Afghanistan war. The barrel of a gun is not enough to provide legitimacy and the western powers had to relearn the lessons from the Vietnam and other decolonisation wars.

## Remote control warfare

Slowly, the war strategies are changing again. Large scale military interventions, with military occupation and nation building ambitions, will become rare. The ambitions are lowered to keeping the terrorists down with remote control warfare – drones - keeping supply chains open by hunting pirates and, when the opportunity arises, through proxy wars or lending a high tech hand to the partners of choice in civil wars. It is difficult to defend these strategies with human rights rhetoric, so they remain more covert or are legitimated with other concerns (except in the last case, where 'humanitarian arms deliveries' will soon become the newest contradiction in terminis [contradiction in terms]).

Conscription has no role to play in these new military strategies and will not come back. It lost its function in these strategies, while the objectives of this warfare can not legitimate at home a lot of casualties.

*continued on page 6*



'Remote control precision warfare'. Source: Somin Belcher, Alamy, via Brokeronline.eu



# Ten years on: US COs from illegal wars and their reception

The most powerful weapon we have against war is the refusal of the individual to become a soldier and the refusal of the individual soldier to fight. It is his or her ability to say "No" that could stop armies and end wars. With more soldiers willing to desert and more soldiers willing to stand in solidarity with them doing so, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could not have been waged. Mass desertion by military personnel backed by solidarity strikes in the military and in civilian society could stop many illegal wars as well as spread the message that all war is a crime against humanity.

When even drone operators resist illegitimate orders to fight illegal wars, we will end these wars. The list of U.S. and international laws violated by George Bush is long, as is the list of laws broken, so far, by Barack Obama. A list of Bush's crimes can be read here. Much of the law is on our side. But it is misinterpreted, misused, and largely ignored. With grass roots education of soldiers, GI [soldier] resistance can grow.

More than 200 "GIs have publicly refused service and spoken out against the wars, all risking prison and some serving long sentences. An estimated 250 U.S. war resisters are currently taking refuge in Canada. Countless others leave quietly, disappearing from the ranks, unrecorded by the military." [From the introduction to the 2011 *Courage to Resist* book, About Face: Military Resisters Turn Against War]

A 2012 publication from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: *Conscientious Objection to Military Service* is available in print and online here: [tinyurl.com/OHCHRCos](http://tinyurl.com/OHCHRCos) It covers many relevant issues related to conscientious objection in many nation states. Regardless of how states define which terms - i.e. conscientious objection, alternative service, noncombatant service, civilian service, etc - what is needed is a worldwide grass roots movement to demand the right of the individual war resister to be respected for his/her individual definitions and limits of what their consciences will allow them to do and not do.

Conscience is an individual's personal moral sense of what is right and what is wrong. It was innately apparent to Bradley Manning that the murders, by his government's military, that he witnessed on video, were wrong. It was clear to him that Iraq's being handed over to be tortured for having exercised their right to petition was wrong. Real existing U.S. law and international law was on his side. But it has not backed up his actions. Soldiers like Ethan McCord and Josh

Stieber have testified that the murders revealed by Bradley Manning with the leak of the Collateral Murder video, and the Iraq War Logs, and the Afghan War Diaries were not aberrations or isolated incidents. Rather, they were routine, everyday occurrences.

In the international legal framework, "Conscientious Objection to military service is based on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights." [from *Conscientious Objection to Military Service*, page 7] From that is derived the concept of conscientious objection being based on religion or belief. We must no longer let any state decide what "belief" is acceptable for an individual or a soldier to hold before they are exempt from soldiering or further soldiering. Presently, a distinction is made between a pacifist and a conscientious objector. A CO may be opposed to all war and still believe in the use of personal, physical violence in response to a physical attack on one's person or family. It follows that we must now demand that individuals need the freedom to decide for themselves that even if they would defend their nation's shores from attack in a military capacity, that they still have the right, in every nation, to decide for themselves to refuse to participate in, or be complicit in any way with, illegal wars of aggression like the imperialist wars waged by the United States in Iraq and in Afghanistan and so many other countries. We must demand the right of Selective Conscientious Objection and support those struggling for that right.

No government ought to be able to discriminate against any conscientious objector (CO) to military service based on the nature of that CO's beliefs. Selective conscientious objection - allowing an individual to accept the legitimacy of some military action and still refuse to fight in what his/her own conscience tells him/her is an illegal and immoral war - must be respected and legitimized by all states. Opposition to Apartheid in South Africa was recognized as a legitimate reason to be granted CO status and exemption from military service in South Africa. Political opposition to wars of aggression must also be accepted reasons to grant individuals CO status.

There needs to be CO curriculum taught in high schools, if not also from kindergarten up. There is a need to have the definition of a CO communicated clearly to soldiers upon their enlistment. And there needs to be an ongoing educational campaign directed toward



military officers that it is normal for individuals to evolve and develop and change their beliefs - and that they have the right to change their beliefs without fear of penalty, retribution, or retaliation for doing so.

U.S. Iraq war resister Andre Shepherd is still in Germany appealing the denial of his asylum application by the German Federal Office. Andre has been very vocal with his opposition to the illegal war policies of the United States.

Attorney James Branum, who has represented many COs and war resisters has pointed out the fact that resisters, including deserters, who have spoken publicly of their opposition to the illegal U.S. wars of aggression have received longer prison sentences than those who have been silent, many of whom have been discharged without prison time. Many U.S. COs and War Resisters are still in Canada and face/ing the fear of being deported if they are not granted political asylum by the Canadian government. Kimberly Rivera, whom Canada did deport, is one of those U.S. soldiers who did speak up against the war and did receive a harsher sentence for doing so. She was also not given the information she needed to file a CO application when she declared her CO beliefs to a U.S. Army chaplain. Kimberly is a pregnant mother of four other children who has just started serving her sentence for desertion. A petition for her release can be signed here: [tinyurl.com/KimPetition](http://tinyurl.com/KimPetition) Kimberly's recent words before her court martial can be read here: [tinyurl.com/WordsOfKim](http://tinyurl.com/WordsOfKim)

There must be nondiscrimination between those who have performed military service and COs. Benefits granted by the U.S.





# The militarisation of youth in Bolivarian Venezuela

President Hugo Chavez systematically militarised Venezuelan society, from young to old. This is perhaps not too surprising when recalling that he came to power as Lieutenant Colonel Chavez in 1998, after leading a coup d'etat in 1992. It was the first time during the democratic period, which began in 1958, that a member of the armed forces was chosen as the country's leader. Since that time there has been a progressive militarisation of the country, with a special emphasis on young people.

## Starting them young

In 1981 'pre-military instruction' was added as an optional subject to the curriculum of the last two years of secondary education in public schools, prior to university. It became mandatory in both public and private education in 1999. Theoretical classes about the origins of the state and the nation from a military perspective are mixed with practical military drill, exercises in survival and military confrontation, such as describing the weapons used by the military. Sometimes putting together and dismantling a pistol can also be part of the course. One part gives a historical overview of the establishment of Venezuela as a country that has won successive military victories against different empires, i.e. history told from a military perspective, whilst another part gives classes about human rights.

An old university exclusively for the military today forms part of the system of public universities: the National Experimental Polytechnic University of the Armed Forces (UNEFA), where enrolment has grown

significantly since 2004, from 2,500 students to 230,000. The students receive a militarised education with different rituals, which are more appropriate in on a military base, such as singing the national anthem before classes. UNEFA prides itself on actively contributing to the training of the National Bolivarian Military, a civil component of the Armed Forces created by Chavez's administration. According to official figures, this 'civilian' military is made up of 13,000 men and women from all over the country. University authorities claim that students join the military voluntarily, but it is not clear if they can graduate if they refuse to participate.

To legitimise its initiatives, the Bolivarian National Military uses article 326 of the Constitution, which talks of the 'principle joint responsibility of citizens in the integral defence of the nation.' President Chavez's government program of 2013-2019 promised 'to expand the organisation of towns for the integral defence of the country', which portends the continual, profound militarisation of society.

Another example of militarism meddling with young Venezuelan minds is the use of symbolic elements which suggest that the vertical and authoritarian model represented by the Armed Forces is the most efficient model for organising one's life in society. Despite the civil vote of confidence in him, President Chavez became accustomed to attending official ceremonies in military uniform. The red beret, used by leaders of coup d'états and by Chavez himself, during

February 1992, formed an important part of Bolivarian dress. The Paseo de Los Proceres in Caracas - a military infrastructure inaugurated in 1956 by the dictator Marcos Perez Jimenez - remains a privileged site for its military marches as well as its public demonstrations in support of the government, for example, the inaugural march of the 6th Global Social Forum, which took place there in January 2006.

## Not just the youth – history, violence, and space

The militarisation of youth in Venezuela is part of the general militarisation of the country and therefore needs to be put into context. Following the general tendency of Latin American countries, Venezuela is a country whose history is a succession of wars and military heroes. Of these heroes, Simon Bolivar is the towering figure, having won independence from Spain for Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. Four years after his death in 1830, the Venezuelan Congress began to institutionalise homage to him. He was said to have a 'warlike' or 'warrior's' masculinity and is the model for Venezuelan men, with emphasis on maleness, valour, and patriotism. People wrongly believe that the current Venezuelan army descends from Simon Bolivar's liberation army, but Bolívar's army only lasted until 1870; it wasn't until the 1930s that the modern Venezuelan army was created, by Gómez.

A new Constitution was written in 1999. One of the changes was the inclusion for the first *continues on page 13*

## conscience TAXES FOR PEACE NOT WAR, works for a world where taxes are used to nurture peace, not pay for war.

Here at conscience we often hear the excuse that if conscientious objectors won the right to divert taxes away from military expenditure, a range of other groups and individuals would demand a similar right to divert their taxes away from paying for state education, new roads or health services. Creating a Peace Tax fund is different – the military intentionally kill and harm people as part of their role, no other area of government spending does so. The desire not to contribute to state education or the National Health Service is a political objection: our objection is one driven by conscience and one with a legislative precedent.

When conscientious objection was recognised in Britain by Parliament in 1916, a form of 'alternative service' was available to COs. There is no alternative service for present day conscientious objectors, who are required to pay for the military regardless of matters of conscience. conscience campaigns for a new form of alternative service: one that allows COs to pay the military part of their taxes to a non-military security fund (Peace Tax fund), thus providing a means by which COs can contribute to security in good conscience.

conscience is about to launch a new campaign 'Meet the Real Peacebuilders' to highlight the valuable non-violent peacebuilding work that is currently being carried out across the world. We want to show decision-makers that there are effective, alternative solutions to military security that you can pay tax for

with a clear conscience. conscience will use these real life examples of peacekeeping work to campaign for the development of the government's inter-departmental Conflict Pool. The Conflict Pool funds conflict prevention, stabilisation and peacekeeping activities to reduce the number of people around the world whose lives are affected by violent conflict.

## 14th International Conference on Peace Tax Campaigns and War Tax Resisters

In February 2013 conscience attended the International Conference organised by Acción colectiva de objetores y objetoras de conciencia (ACOOC); a Colombian organisation that campaigns for the right of COs and promotes non-violence in Colombia.

During the conference we learnt much about the problems of conscientious objection in Colombia and its lack of recognition there. ACOOC has worked hard to stop COs from going into the army, but though they have managed to stop COs from carrying out military service, they are still not recognised as COs.

In the UK COs have moved from conscientious objection to military service to conscientious objection to military taxes. It should always be remembered that they are the same fight. The only difference is here in the UK we do not see first-hand the violence and other crimes we commit through our taxes. We don't meet the families our money divides and devastates or the people we wound or the people we kill.

For more information on conscience and the work we do please visit: [conscienceonline.org.uk](http://conscienceonline.org.uk)



## Using human rights systems to protect conscientious objectors

We're happy to announce the launch of 'A Conscientious Objector's Guide to the International Human Rights System'. This is an update of 'A Conscientious Objector's Guide to the UN Human Rights System', published in 2000, and covers the multitude of developments that have taken place in terms of human rights and conscientious objection since then.

As well as reading it as a book, you can also use the interactive guide online.

The various human rights systems are complicated and can be off-putting. Different mechanisms have their own processes, requirements, and potential outcomes. In addition, it can be difficult to choose which system might be the most effective, or most promising, to use.

The main purpose of this Guide is to help individuals and organisations who wish to raise issues and cases about conscientious objection to work out what the possibilities are, how to use them, and the likely advantages and disadvantages of the different procedures. We hope that, in breaking down the steps involved, these mechanisms become more approachable.

It was as a side-event to the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 28th May.

This guide was produced jointly with the Quaker United Nations Office, the Centre for Civil and Political Rights, and Conscience and Peace Tax International. It was funded through the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. It is the work, primarily, of Andreas Speck, and we are really grateful to him!

We encourage you to take a look at the Guide, and start using it! You'll find it here: <http://co-guide.org>

# 'One of the boys' – on the conscription of women to the Israeli military

Israel has had, since its creation, mandatory military service for both men and women. It prides itself, both internally and externally, on its relatively gender-equal military in which women can both contribute to their society just as men can, and get an opportunity to prove their worth. The apparent gender equality presented by the military provokes a particular feminist perspective on the conscription of women.

When I was about eleven my brother had a poster in his room of a female combat soldier in training, carrying a male soldier on her back, simulating an evacuation of an injured comrade in battle. At the time I made up my mind that I wanted to be a combat soldier; I wanted to prove to the men, but maybe more so to myself, that I could do the same things as them. More or less at the same age I also knew that I was against the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinians - that violence was not something that I would like to promote in any way. But the appeal of having an opportunity to really prove myself as equal to men in this very male-dominated field was stronger. With time, I grew out of this, as my understanding of feminism and equality developed, but there are still times when on an emotional level I get the same feelings, and sense the same admiration towards those women combat soldiers 'taking on' the men.

Historically, the heroisation of combatants has usually overlooked women. While feminist and anti-militarism movements tried to challenge the concept of heroisation, it seems the Israeli military has tried to promote participation of women in combat, at least for appearances. The conscription of women to the Israeli military is not only another part of universal conscription in Israel - and of the sentiment that 'everyone goes' - but is also specifically highlighted as a policy based on, and promoting, gender-equality. The Military, made of 34% women, prides itself on 88% of position in the army being open for women, and women's participation in combat. This illusion of equality has two purposes. The first is to motivate young women to serve, showing them that the military is a place for them to prove that they can be equal to men in their duties and performance. The fact that hundreds of soldiers complain about sexual harassment in the military every year, and, according to military research in 2002, 80% of female soldiers were sexually harassed during their service, is usually overlooked.

The second purpose of this illusion of equality is part of the legitimisation of the military, both for itself and for the rest of Israeli society and the international community. The Israeli military prides itself on being 'the most moral military in the world'<sup>1</sup>. This phrase is especially used to legitimise the IDF during combat, saying that because Israeli soldiers act in the most moral way possible considering the circumstances, civilian casualties, injuries and damage to property during 'military operations', must be justifiable. After the attack on Gaza in 2009 (Operation Cast Lead) the Israeli minister of

defense Ehud Barak responded to testimonies



Photo credit: Wikipedia

by soldiers regarding the harm caused to civilians by asserting: 'We have the most moral military in the world. I spent tens of years in uniform, I know what happened in Yugoslavia, in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and I tell you that from the chief of staff until the last soldier, the most moral military in the world stands at the disposal of the Israeli government. I have no doubt every specific incident will be looked into'.

To maintain this perception, the IDF must appear to have a higher moral standard than that of the people it fights against, not only on the front line but also at the level of its core values. For this reason, the conscription of women and the illusion of equality for women inside the military system, together with the conscription of homosexuals, give the IDF the moral highground - when it comes to 'Western' values - compared to any other military in the world, and especially in the Middle East. And so the Israeli military and Israeli society can celebrate the compulsory conscription of woman as a progressive next step for women's liberation.

The other side of this, is that the women's peace movement in Israel has been, for decades, a dominant voice in the general peace movement, and has managed to use their unique voice as women to influence policies. Interestingly, at times this was also done by using the role a militaristic society allowed women to dominate - the role of a caring mother of a soldier - to demand the end of war and the return of the soldiers back home, a strategy that was effective with the movement Four Mothers<sup>3</sup> that was instrumental in the final retreat of Israeli from Lebanon in 2000. Other feminist peace movements took a different path questioning the role given to them as supporters and educators of future soldiers, and formed group like Women in Black, New Profile, the Women's coalition for peace and many more, all trying to raise a clear, ongoing, feminist voice against the occupation and militarization of Israeli society.

In 2005 Idan Halili, a 19 year old Israeli young women declared her refusal to serve in the military saying: "A strongly patriarchal institution, like the army, underlines female marginality and

*continued on page 8*



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time of military personnel's right to vote. It also granted them other political rights, such the right to be elected to public office. Today, soldiers are ministers, governors and mayors. In the governor's elections on 16 December 2012, where the United Socialists Party of Venezuela (PSUV) nominated candidates to twenty-three state governments of the country, twelve were in the military. Of these, eleven were elected.

In Venezuela there is a primacy of violence – symbolic or real – as a means of resolving conflicts. Victory is understood as the elimination or humiliation of the other. Venezuela has one of the highest homicide rates in the region. Historically, management posts within the country's police force are given to military personnel, and the police use military weaponry. Security operations, including the recent 'Bicentennial Security Plan', count heavily on the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB), which is one of the four components making up the Bolivarian

National Armed Forces (FANB). The serious violence in Venezuela has been categorised as a 'low intensity war' by different experts. Keeping oneself 'safe' has engendered an important change in habits and customs. People stay in their homes at night.

A 2002 law designated almost 30% of Venezuela as 'security zones' (including shores, lakes, islands and navigable rivers, areas surrounding public facilities, and any other area "considered necessary for the nation's security and defence"). There are harsh prison sentences for anyone who violates this. There is resistance to this: in 2011 2,400 people were taken to court for participating in a protest. Most of them people were young rural leaders, union members, or students. However, resistance to militarisation of Venezuelan society more generally is scarce.

Rafael Uzcátegui, based on his article in the upcoming WRI book 'Sowing Seeds: The Militarisation of Youth and How to Counter It'

*continued from page 12*

Dept. of Veterans Affairs, such as healthcare for veterans, housing and education loans, etc., should be granted to COs whether or not they have served in the military or performed noncombat service or alternative civilian service if a military draft should return.

Today, there are COs in hiding, in open sanctuary, and in prison. Tomorrow COs must be honored and celebrated.

In Berkeley, California, I have written resolutions that have been passed, first by the Berkeley

Peace and Justice Commission [which advises the city council and the school district on matters of peace and justice] and later by the Berkeley City Council. One of those resolutions was passed in 2007 and proclaimed May 15th, International Conscientious Objectors Day, as Berkeley CO and War Resisters' Day, every year. It designated and recognized that day as "the day on which Berkeley acknowledges, honors, and celebrates COs and war resisters, civilian and military, past, present, and future." Every year since, COs and War Resisters from WWII to the present have spoken, sung songs,

*finished on page 7*

## International Day of Action For Military-Free Education and Research

Friday 14 June 2013 will be an International Day of Action For Military-Free Education and Research. Inspired by the week of action that took place in many German towns and cities in September 2012, and ahead of the planned week of international action in 2014, the 2013 day of action will see groups, organisations, and individuals from the USA, India, the UK, Chile, Israel - plus hopefully South Korea, South Africa, Australia, Spain, Venezuela, and others – to join those in Germany challenging the presence and influence of the military in their countries' education systems, from recruiters' visits to schools to the government funding of military research, and the privileging of military approaches associated with this.

Those taking action will use the same slogan (International Day of Action For Military-Free Education and Research), and they might want to use a similar logo to that of the German network, but they have autonomy in deciding what action - or actions - they do. Here are some ideas for actions: sharing photos of pupils, teachers, parents and others holding placards with statements criticising the privileging of the military within education, and calling for alternatives (Gillian Wearing-style); doing a piece of protest theatre; and writing to heads of schools and universities challenging them about their compliance.

The WRI office will support any member groups or individuals who want to take action. We will publish descriptions and photos of actions on our website, and the German network will do the same on their website. We will also be circulating relevant news and resources in the five weeks before the day itself. It's not too late to get involved! See [www.wri-irg.org/node/21378](http://www.wri-irg.org/node/21378) for more information, and email [owen@wri-irg](mailto:owen@wri-irg) if you are interested in taking part, or if you have ideas for actions.

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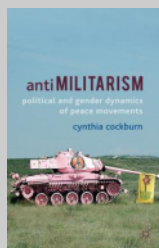
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Around the world children, adolescents and young adults encounter the military and military values in a variety of ways, from visits to schools by military personnels, to video games and the presence of the military and its

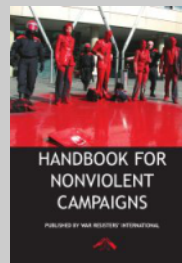
symbols in public places. Young people are encouraged to see the military as necessary and valuable; something to be supportive of, not to question. Through articles, images, survey data and interviews, *Sowing Seeds: The Militarisation of Youth and How to Counter It* documents the seeds of war that are planted in the minds of young people. It also explores the seeds of resistance to this militarisation that are being sown resiliently and creatively by numerous people.

Edited by: Owen Everett  
Published by: WRI  
ISBN: 978-0-903517-27-0  
Orders: £5.00 + postage



Conscientious objectors are generally seen as male — as are soldiers. This book breaks with this assumption. Women conscientiously object to military service and militarism. Not only in countries which conscript women — such as Eritrea and Israel — but also in countries without conscription of women. In doing so, they redefine antimilitarism from a feminist perspective, opposing not only militarism, but also a form of antimilitarism that creates the male conscientious objector as the 'hero' of antimilitarist struggle. This anthology includes contributions by women conscientious objectors and activists from Britain, Colombia, Eritrea, Israel, Paraguay, South Korea, Turkey, and the USA, plus documents and statements.

Published by: WRI  
Edited by Ellen Elster and Majken Jul Sørensen  
Preface by Cynthia Enloe  
ISBN 978-0-903517-22-5. 152 pages.  
Orders: £8.00 + postage



Social change doesn't just happen. It's the result of the work of committed people striving for a world of justice and peace. This work gestates in groups or cells of activists, in discussions, in training sessions, in reflecting on previous experiences, in planning, in experimenting and in learning from others. Preparing ourselves for our work for social justice is key to its success. There is no definitive recipe for successful nonviolent actions and campaigns. This handbook, however, is a series of resources that can inspire and support your own work, especially if you adapt the resources to your own needs and context.

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## The Broken Rifle

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